

The Church on a War Basis

BY
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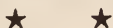
AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS

14 BEACON STREET - BOSTON - MASS.

*To the fathers and the mothers
Whose children are Abroad,
In the service of the Nation
Or the service of the Lord.*

The Church on a War Basis

By S. RALPH HARLOW



The Challenge. In this age when convictions are being forged amid the heat of war and the sacrifices of the battle front the accusation is being brought repeatedly against the Church that it lacks a vital message for the hour. "Among the majority of those attached to the churches there is obviously a faintness of conviction and a fading enthusiasm. Any sense of possessing an Evangel for the Age is utterly lacking;" so writes Dr. Orchard, the great London preacher. In Donald Hankey's widely read book, "A Student in Arms," the question is raised as to whether the Y. M. C. A., or some other organization, will not be substituted for the Church, when the millions of fighting men return from the trenches. In a letter from a man who has been three years at the front are these words: "It is not that we are bitter over the failure of the Church to sound a message, we are only sad."

A United Church. Yet never in all its history has the Church been more united than it is today—Protestant and Catholic, Greek and Bulgarian, we are welded together by one mighty conviction. And I am thinking not only of the Church in the Allied nations but also of the Church in the Central Powers. We are united in this—that we have backed our Governments in war, to the last man and last dollar if need be. Possibly the German Christians have outstripped all other branches of the Church in loyalty to the Government which they serve, but we are willing to challenge their loyalty with our own.

The Kaiser and God. All of us have been horrified by the expressions of pious sentiment in which the Kaiser and God, the Kingdom of Righteousness and the German Government were linked up so closely as to be almost interchangeable. But let us not forget that the great Hippodrome in New York rang with the plaudits of thousands

while Dr. George Adams, one of our American ministers of the Gospel, told the crowd that he had been a minister of the Church whose business it was to keep men out of hell, but that now he was a member of a Board of Munitions whose business was "to blow the Germans—where they belong." This was at a meeting held under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. I dare to maintain that the Church has sounded more clearly and more trenchantly than any other organization behind the Government the message of the hour—the war message. What other organization displays from its buildings the service flag as often as the Church of Christ? And still we face continual accusations that we lack a message.

On my desk is a letter from one of our Y. M. C. A. secretaries at the front and here is an extract from his letter: "All doctrines and ecclesiastical traditions are destroyed never to be awakened. What shall be the religion of the future is the great problem." We have given our sons, parted with our money, proclaimed from the pulpit that we stand by the nation and then are told that we have no message.

Is it possible that the world has a better understanding of what our message *ought* to be than we in the Church have apprehended it? Is it possible that *we* are content to support earthly powers and feel satisfied to back issues that are temporal, while the whole world is hungering and unsatisfied, looking to us for a word of conviction of a Country that is Eternal and a Warfare that is Spiritual.

Our War Claims. Is it not along this fighting line and on this battle front that we are rightly judged as holding a fading enthusiasm and a faintness of conviction? Because we are in a world at war folk have discovered what "a war basis" means. They know and we know that the Church has *always* claimed to be on "a war basis." They know and we know that our Founder made all the claims to Kingship and to the rights of a Commander, and that He, too, said: "I came not to bring Peace but a Sword." And the world knows that the claims of its warfare are earthly claims to es-

establish human relationships—and it is willing to leave it at that, whatever we of the Church try to read into it of deeper significance. But the world knows that *we* lay claim that our goal is an Eternal Kingdom and that we fight to establish spiritual relationships that shall outlive the body.

The Price of War. Now the world knows the price it is paying in its warfare and it knows the methods of that warfare. The world knows the price our Commander asks of us, His soldiers, and the methods He offers us for the advancement of His cause. And as the world contrasts the passionate enthusiasm and conviction with which youth and age have poured out blood and treasure for earthly kings with the devotion of the Church to Christ and His cause, it hesitates to put much faith in us or our convictions. For the world has placed in the field of conflict 42,000,000 men, equipped for war. It has followed those men wherever they have gone and backed them to the last trench and farthest mountain top. For those men are its sons, its husbands, its fathers, brothers and sweethearts. And of women there have been not a few, as Red Cross nurses, or driving through the mud at fifty miles an hour while shells burst to the right and left of the little Ford cars.

The Courage of the Soldier. And the soldiers of the world's armies, ah! with what spirit they have offered themselves. The snows of the Alps or of Siberia's winter; the hot, blasting sands of the desert, the mud and filth of Flanders—no bitterness of climate, no peril on land or on sea could keep them from the call of duty. Where they were ordered there they went, and with a song for Death they have advanced over fields more terrible than Dante's pictured hell. The tools of their warfare, terrible to dwell upon, they have taken in their hands and they have not faltered. The liquid flame that burns its victims to a crisp, the gas that blinds and torments, the bomb, the bayonet, bursting shell and volcanic mine—these have been their instruments of warfare. Pain and torture have been their comrades and their foes.

And in their ranks and by their side the Church has placed its sons; they, who were called "out of the world" have not failed the world in this hour of conflict.

Our Proclamation. But for the follower of Christ there can be but one excuse whereby he can use these weapons of the world's warfare, these instruments which torture and maim, and scar his brother men. That one excuse is that, given no other way out, the end justifies *the means*. What that end may seem to be to the German Christian we will leave to his conscience and the God of Justice. We, who fight beneath Freedom's banner, believe our Cause is worth the price, though we shudder at the means. But one proclamation we have dared to make to all the world without excuse for methods to be employed. We have proclaimed that no matter how holy and how righteous this earthly warfare is—our Christian warfare is more holy; that no matter how great the need for political righteousness and human freedom the primary need of humanity is personal righteousness and the freedom of the soul. The world has heard our proclamation for we have been sounding it through twenty centuries. And the folk of the world know that the methods of our warfare are love, mercy and peace. What, then, is the need which summons us to battle, what the goal we seek, what our answer to the challenge?

The Call to Arms. For two thousand years the summons of our Leader has been ringing in our ears: "Heal the sick, cleanse the leper, open the blind eyes, preach the Gospel." For all these centuries the wail of millions in agony has beaten in upon our self-complacency. Millions of women and little ones die in hopeless misery. One who knows conditions in India and at the front says that there is more needless suffering among the women and children of India today than behind the battle lines of France. "More needless suffering!" We have listened again and again to the stories of the child widows of India. And in Turkey, one woman in a hundred can read and write her own name.

Misery, ignorance and degradation such as Northern France has not seen is broadcast throughout the non-Christian world. And their "holy places." Have we not heard of them by the thousands? Old wells, where mothers plunge their sick children through the icy waters and cry out to the spirits in the dark to hear and to heal; tying bits of rags from little tortured bodies to remind the spirits that a baby is dying in the village. Women and children with cruel sores creeping out long dusty roads to drag their wearied bodies to some old tomb, trusting in old legends to meet their dire need—the nearest doctor six hundred miles away. Will the spirits hear? "Their religion is good enough for them."

The Response. Now what has the answer of the Christian church been to this cry of need, this wail of lost souls? This is our answer, this our "rush to arms"—we have placed on the foreign field one medical missionary for every two million, five hundred thousand people. We have here in these United States one doctor for every six hundred people. That is *our* war basis. We have a preacher of the Gospel here at home for every seven hundred of us here, where every one in three of us profess some form of adherence to the army of Christ; but we have sent out to preach that Gospel not one missionary for every seven hundred thousand of our fellow men, who have never heard of a God of Love or of a Saviour who gave His life to bring us all home to the Father. Our convictions for earthly things are greater than our convictions for spiritual things. And the few we have sent forth to bear this message of Life Eternal—have we sent them gladly, freely, rejoicing in their warfare?

The Volunteers. Let me be concrete: During the past year my pathway has been in and out among our schools and colleges. In more than one hundred of them from Maine to California my theme has been this heavenly warfare. With over nine hundred Christian students I have held individual conferences talking over with them their life work plans. Most of them came from Christian homes, sons and daugh-

ters of men and women who had stood at the Communion Table of our Lord and professed their faith in Him and loyalty to His program for the redemption of the world. Yet not less than one third of the young people with whom I talk raise this question—but my father and mother would never consent to my being a missionary. Only yesterday afternoon a young woman was in my office considering this very question. Her mother is chairman of the Missionary Committee for her Church. Yet her daughter told me that her mother was “afraid” to have missions emphasized too much because “some of *our* young people might take it into their heads to be missionaries.” That Church flies a large “service flag.”

Enlistment Tests. At a recent conference of young people under appointment to sail for over-seas service in the army of Christ they rose one by one to ask for prayer. No secretaries of the Board were present, no friends, only the volunteers. At least one third of that group made this plea—Oh, pray for me that during this next week I may have the spirit of Christ in all I do and say, for I must go back to my own home where my family has no sympathy with my missionary purpose. One young woman broke down while her husband told us that they had been on their knees till two o'clock the previous morning asking God to move their parents' hearts, so bitter was the opposition to their sailing in Christ's army. Another in that group told me her story at the close of the service: “In my mother's Sunday School class I learned the idea of service for Christ. When in my sophomore year at college I wrote home and told my parents that I wanted to be a missionary I was told that I must give up that ‘foolish idea,’ or leave college. From that day I have been forced to earn every cent of my way. Week by week I wrote a loving letter home. Months would pass without so much as a postal card in reply. My brothers and sisters joined in the fight to break my ‘foolish’ purpose, though they are members of the Christian church. The

night before I left for a missionary training school to complete my preparation for my life work my sisters stole from my room all my books and clothing which they were able to find. With what little I was able to collect I left early in the morning. I would rather sail for my post now but I feel it my duty to go home though it is to be one of the hardest experiences of my life. I do it for Christ's sake." Well, she's out on the firing line today, out there where the battle is raging back and forth in a continent where Islam and Christianity are face to face in a death struggle for the supremacy of a quarter of the globe, teaching in a Christian school for girls, the only one for a vast region, where a million people wait in darkness for the breaking of the Light. She is training leaders and home builders for the future, for the making ready a nation for the coming of the King. I hope her Christian parents and friends write her a letter once in a while, a letter to their soldier in Christ's army, even though they have no service flag with a star in it outside the home. My first year in Turkey brought me into close contact with as splendid a type of manhood as I ever hope to meet. He was a graduate of one of our leading universities and theological seminaries. *He* didn't hear from home because his father wanted him to be a lawyer and not a soldier of the Cross in over-seas service.

The Mothers Who Give. Nor should I omit another phase of this problem of finding volunteers for Christ's service battalions. In a city of the middle West a young medical graduate and his bride were about to leave for China. He was to take his place as a doctor in a city of teeming thousands, waiting for his healing touch. Thank God their parents *were* loyal members of Christ's army. But into that home came the friends, members of the Church. And the old, old story was taken up to which I have listened many times, "Oh, how can they let their children go way off there to that heathen country? Her mother can't love her as we love our daughters." Never shall that *lie* dare to rise to

Christian lips again. Are the mothers who are giving their boys to France the ones who do not *care*? Are the fathers whose daughters are now upon the sea sailing through the submarine zone, bound for the hospitals behind the lines in Flanders, the fathers who care *less* for their daughters than those whose sons and daughters are safe at home? Just this past summer a mother came to me, her eyes alight with pride and enthusiasm. Her son had just returned from France where he had been driving an ambulance. He was now enlisting in the aviation service. My memory took me back across the years—only a few, when that same woman, a member of the Church of the Living Christ, gave her daughter twenty-four hours to resign from the Student Volunteer Movement or be cut off in her junior year of college without a cent and deprived of all the rights of a daughter. Proud of a son who will rain death and wounds upon the sons of other mothers, incensed at a Christ-like daughter whose great desire was to bring the touch of healing to those in pain and the light to those in darkness! It is the Great Captain, is it not, whom we call “The Light of the World?” It was that same Captain who said of us “*Ye are the light of the world.*” Not once in the past fifteen years has the Woman’s Board of Missions with which I am most closely in touch been able to find within twenty of the number of volunteers needed in any one of those years to meet its crying needs, the needs of our sisters in spiritual darkness. Not once in the past dozen years that I have known the affairs of my own Board has that Board been able to secure the number of recruits needed to carry on its fight. “Carry on”—those words take on new significance these days. But why continue? Page after page might be covered with such stories as these I have related here.

Our Marching Orders. The world knows our marching orders—“Go ye into *all the world* and preach this Gospel to *every creature.*” The world knows that we claim to have a

Cause, and they know the methods by which we might advance that Cause? Do we?

Last week a young minister turned to me and said: "When I told my father and mother that I wanted to give my life to the service of Christ, the instant reply was, 'Not on the foreign field.'" Not on the foreign field! Not over seas! Not where the hosts of the enemies of Christ and His kingdom press thickest and hardest. Not where the lines are calling desperately for reserves. Not where little children and frail women suffer from unrighteousness as great as ever held Belgium by the throat. Not where the name of Jesus is unknown and where the love of God has never been preached. Not though it be the bugle call of Christ Himself and the cry of humanity in its direst need—not there shall our son go. But put the war bugle to the Nation's lips—and with shot and shell, with sword and bayonet we send our sons by the thousands to trenches that run red with blood.

Slackers. How often do we hear the old refrain: "There's so much to do at home." Even if we can't *go* we can do a little right here. And because there are "Italians in New York" or "a great need out West" many a man and woman satisfies conscience and turns from this call from over seas. God knows there is need at home. But let us not forget that there is more actual work of rescue and uplift being done in New York City than in any other city in the world except London. The settlement houses and churches and hospitals in New York put side by side would reach from the Battery to the Bronx. We had *more* young Christian workers connected with the one settlement and Church where I worked for three years in New York than we have in our entire province in Turkey. But who has the right to put aside the terrible need for soldiers over seas because we need workers among the immigrants and then settle down as a lawyer in Detroit or Los Angeles? Who will deny the honest charge that a man or a woman who stays at home because of the

need "among the poor whites" in the South and then takes up school teaching in Montclair or Wellesley is a "slacker" in the army of the Lord? I know a man who set his whole energy against his daughter's going to India because of the "need at home," but later on he likewise refused to let his daughter go into settlement work in New York City. There is a great deal of "inconclusive and lax thinking" on this subject of our responsibility to the cause of "Peace on earth, good will among men."

Pages from a Mother's Letter. Side by side with these words of parents who stand between Almighty God and His challenge through His Son to the sons of men for life service, I would place the pages which come to the office of our Board from those mothers and fathers to whom Christ *is* the Lord and Master they confessed Him to be when they joined His host and enlisted under His banner. Here are a few lines to a daughter about to enter missionary service: "Your father and I would not dare, even if we wished, to put anything in the way of God's purpose for your life; service in some form is what we desire for our children. We are unspeakably glad for the consecration which makes you ready to give yourself, and we will do our share of giving." Sounds much like letters many Christian parents are now writing to their children, with the substitution of Country in the place of God and patriotism in the place of consecration.

Here are words in a letter from a mother to her son and daughter in Turkey: "It is not, after all, miles and oceans that separate children from their parents. There are children living in this same town with their parents who are far from their mother's heart, but you seem very near to mine for we are one in the greatest of all bonds—a common love and devotion to the service of our blessed Lord. And we are to have the ages to come together with Him. In this faith I brought you up and in this faith we must live." A father writes to his missionary son: "Your mother and I gave you wholly, absolutely, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to answer any

call that He might give you, for service abroad or at home. I believe that every Christian parent should learn of those words of the boy Jesus, 'Did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business?' God's call is always the supreme call."

What courage it will take to stand at last in the presence of the God who gave His Only Son on Calvary and say: "Yes, You called my son, but I felt that I had a greater right to determine where my son should spend his life than You and so I kept him at home." *That* will take courage to say in "that great and terrible day." But by their actions many a father and mother must needs say it. Oh, the joy of standing by the side of a son and daughter and being *able* to say: "I thank Thee, Lord, Thou who didst give Thyself for us, that I was able to give this my child to Thee in Thy service in answer to Thy call."

Our Liberty Loan. And now "our Liberty Loan," for "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," that "they may *all* come into the liberty of the children of God." Are these just *words*, or do they stand for great fundamental truths, truths which made the Cross worthwhile enduring and the road up Calvary the path of duty and of willing sacrifice? In a church crowded with ministers I listened recently to a passionate appeal for the raising of the Churches' Liberty Loan, to advance the cause of Christ's warfare overseas among the millions of heathen and non-Christian peoples. The plea was driven home with great power, and this was the plea—that the church members of the denomination in that state, the state stood second in the Union in its giving to the over-seas' work, should raise their pledges from a little over four cents a week per member to five. Why, if every church member were to give five cents a week to the support of the army on Christ's battle line abroad our Foreign Boards would be able to announce the greatest advance move ever contemplated. A penny a day would be too much, but five cents a week!

"Like a mighty army, moves the Church of God."

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

And the blood-stained, battle-scarred armies of the world
look on and listen.

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the Cross,
Lift high His royal banner
It must not suffer loss."

Yes, the world knows today what it means to be a soldier, what a "War basis" is. It knows what it costs to support "a mighty army" in the field. We *sing* and *talk* of a war basis, but we *give* and volunteer our *lives* as those who never heard a bugle blast or saw a banner wave. It is true that we have given to the Red Triangle, to the Red Cross, and to many noble appeals we have responded in these days. But *most* of these gifts are for "our own," and "even the publicans and sinners do likewise." The Germans have raised huge sums for their Y. M. C. A. and Red Cross. A year ago in Berlin I saw the marvelous system of their Y. M. C. A. work; and their Red Cross is perhaps the best in the world. Does *that* make them advancers of the cause of Christ or excuse them from their failure on *His battle front*?

It is to you, Mr. Average Christian, that this appeal should come. Do not forget that thousands, many of them poor, give far more to the cause of Christ's work "over seas" than you give. That five cents a week does not mean that *you* have given anything like that amount, for many a one is giving her ten and twenty. Over a thousand churches of a single great denomination reported "no gifts" for Christ's missionary program last year. Can you write out a *logical* program and call it *Christ's* and omit the missionary heart? And you, Mr. and Mrs. Average Christian, are the fathers and mothers who are failing to train your children to a sense

of responsibility to the army of Christ and to His call for soldiers.

Is the Challenge Fair? Is the challenge that we "lack a vital message" fair, or is it entirely wrong? Has not the world a right to expect of us either one of two things: that we cease all this singing about "The Son of God goes forth to war" and "Not one *mite* would I withhold" and all our other "war basis hymns" that we call for so often in our Prayer Meeting or at Christian Endeavor, or—that we begin to prove to the world that we ARE on a war basis and mean what we say. That we begin to give valid evidence in life and in gifts that the "Faith of our fathers, living still, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword," is a conquering faith, for which we will offer our sons, our daughters, our wealth; that we are willing to sacrifice for it as much as the world is willing to sacrifice for the kingdoms of this earth. Has it not been true that while we have excused ourselves with "religion begins at home" we have not really had much missionary spirit right in our own neighborhood. How many members of the average church are seeking to win those who do not now know Christ as Lord and Master of their lives into His blessed allegiance? If we were doing that we would be longing for the whole world to know *Him*. Can we blame the world for longing for some passionate expression of and devotion to a faith that will speak of God and of the things that transcend the smoke of battle lines.

A Soldier's Message. That they would seek a faith whose followers back their message with their lives is to be expected of men who have backed with their all earthly causes. In the *Boston Transcript* there appeared recently a letter written by one of the gallant soldiers in Kitchener's army. This letter contains a message which the members of the Church of Jesus Christ may well heed. I would I might quote it all, just as it was written in the hospital, before he died, but let me give a sentence here and there that we may hear

what a soldier of the world's army thinks of us and our fight.

"Lying here in the hospital, helpless, three months, from shrapnel wounds which refuse to heal, and, just waiting, I have been thinking. Strange, isn't it, that my thoughts always go back to the one theme of Foreign Missions—especially as I never thought of them before but in derision; yes, and notwithstanding help cheerfully given me at mission hospitals in Amritsar, Jaffa and Uganda, when I was sick, I do not remember giving a single penny to Foreign Missions in my life. For gold was my god. My whole energies were set on trade. I might, in common fairness, have recognized who prepared the way for the markets which I found so profitable. But I did not. Here in my bed, reading my New Testament at random, for want of something better to do one night, I was struck by the words of John xvii., 3: 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' I could not forget these words. They have been with me every waking hour these twelve months. They are with me now. And how precious I find them, who can tell? They cause me to care not a jot for this poor maimed body soon to be set aside.

"I realize now that God cares for every savage of our race, even as He cares for me. Would I had earlier known this new life. I would so gladly die for *this* Cause, now it is too late. It is sweet to die for England—I do not regret it—but oh, the contemplation of what it is to minister and to die for the sake and in the service of the King of Kings. That will never be my part. I do not complain. I am not worthy of the high honor involved. But perhaps I might have been, had somebody taken me in hand early enough. *Why does the Church keep Foreign Missions so much in the background?* How is it that I was left so long a scoffer?

"I do not blame any mortal, but I am saying that there is something wrong with the scheme of things which fails to put the *whole world* for Christ right in the forefront as the battle cry of the Christian Church. My message is that all

who are wise should work in the service while it is day, remembering the coming night." These are the words of a man face to face with the great realities of life and death. Shall we not face this soldier's challenge.

The Day of Victory. Is this a calamity wail? Far from it! One who from childhood has read the lives of the heroes of this warfare of the Cross—David Livingstone, John G. Paton, Mackay of Uganda, Cyrus Hamlin, Coleridge Patterson, Bishop Hannington, Eleanor Chestnut, Corrina Shattuck, and a long list "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong—and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection," should one who has called these "friends" cry Alas? For thirteen centuries the missionary spirit of the Church lay dormant. Today the followers of Christ are waking up. A few score years ago we did not have a single medical missionary on the foreign field; last year three millions in non-Christian lands felt the healing touch of the missionary doctor. Over 27,780 major operations were performed by medical missionaries sent out by the Protestant Church of America and Europe and as many more by Catholic missionaries. There are today 14,066 Catholic and Protestant missionary hospitals on the foreign field. In educational work our missionary schools are found on every battle line where Christianity is face to face with the powers of ignorance and darkness. From Alaska to South Africa the gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached, and the Islands are learning to praise the Name that is above every name.

And Crown Him Lord of All. Would I could picture to you the glory and the beauty of this Christian warfare. Would you could catch the vision which would thrill you at the thought of *your share* as a follower of Christ in helping to "Crown Him Lord of All;" the honor of giving a son or daughter to His service over seas—for be it known unto you

that however faltering, however weak, the Church may have been in her allegiance to her oath of loyalty, those of us who have had the high honor of serving in His army beneath the banner of the Cross know that the power of His Gospel is as great as in the days when it overthrew the Eagles of Rome. That Gospel is still the only interpreter of the problem of evil which can meet the cry of the soul in agony, that Gospel still remains the one great challenge to an uncompromising warfare against all evil—

Blessings abound where'er He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to loose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.

"Here am I!" These are not idle words, to be sung by people who have no consciousness that they represent the great realities of life; God the Father entering into the heart-needs of His children for their redemption. That message your Lord and mine meant to include the least, last, little child in far-off Africa or China. No woman in Turkey is shut out from an inheritance in that blessing, no man denied the right to call Him "Father." But there is one condition placed upon His followers, namely that we *share* with Him who gave His life our lives, with Him who gave His substance our substance—that the world may come back to the Father. Of us, in this greatest of all warfares for the holiest of all causes, is asked the same answer the nations ask of their soldiers in any great adventure, that we respond as soldiers: "Here am I, take me!" Mr. Average Christian, have *you* been a soldier in this warfare? You stood one day before the congregation and took your oath of allegiance to crown Him Lord of your life and make Him known to the world. Are you prepared to back up your pledge that the world may be brought to Him, the Prince of Peace? His Kingdom waits for *you*. The advance is held up by *your* faintness of conviction, *your* fading enthusiasm. God help us to cease our battle songs or to get on *a war basis*.

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